

Department of Defense Worldwide Education Symposium
Remarks for Under Secretary Martha Kanter
MGM Grand Hotel, Las Vegas, NV
Wednesday, July 25, 2012
8:00 AM – 9:15 AM PDT
Remarks: 20 minutes / Q&A: None

First, I am honored to be here with all of you at your 2012 Worldwide Education Symposium – held every three years. You are addressing critically important topics at this gathering with a number of key stakeholders in attendance. The President and the Department of Education are deeply concerned with the education our service members, our Veterans and their families receive. We are pleased to be with you today to share what the Department of Education is doing to help Service Members, Veterans and their families succeed in post-secondary education.

I want to commend you, too, for the attention you are paying to educational needs across the age spectrum – from early childhood into adulthood. It is never too early or too late to further one's education.

The focus of my remarks this morning is on our returning service members, Veterans and their families. As you all well know, hundreds of thousands of Vets will be exiting the service in each of the next five years – some 1.4 million individuals will be returning to civilian life over the next five years or so.

Education offers returning service members and their families a pathway toward careers and success – whether that is a certificate program, a two-year degree program a bachelor's degree, or a postgraduate degree. This matters --- on many levels.

Our service members have served our nation with honor and distinction, and we have a moral imperative to assist them. In addition, the data show that our communities and our economy will be improved with an increasingly college educated population. And, as President Obama remarked a month after taking office, we want to restore America to being first in the world in terms of the number of college graduates we have throughout our nation.

Also, considerable federal funds, both from the Veteran's Administration and the Department of Education, are being expended to support service members, Veterans and their families as they pursue educational opportunity. We want and expect those funds to produce tangible results.

In terms of data points, there are more than 750,000 Veterans or family members who have used or are using the post 9/11 GI Bill since it was launched in 2009 and a total of over \$19 billion dollars has been expended.

Some of these Veterans also use federal financial aid, including Pell grants. And, there is an important point that I will emphasize later: we want service members, Veterans and their families to be knowledgeable about the myriad of federal, state and private aid – both grants and loans – given out by the Department of Education, States, banks and private lenders.

What matters from an educational perspective and for the Department of Education is ensuring that the higher education provided to and obtained by service members **provides value**, is of the **highest quality** and **leads to career readiness and employability**.

That is true for ALL educational opportunities --- we want to have a system where individuals can **ACCESS** post-secondary education, **OBTAIN** a quality educational experience **AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE** And **RECEIVE A DEGREE or APPROPRIATE CERTIFICATE SO THEY ARE CAREER READY and EMPLOYABLE (OR READY FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION)**.

Many of the programs on which the Department of Education has been working over the past three years have real value for Veterans – although these initiatives are not targeted for Veterans in particular. These efforts help all students progress to and through post-secondary education.

Here is a sampling of some of these efforts, focusing on three in particular:

PELL GRANTS:

Through the efforts of the Department of Education, we have increased the size of Pell grants – monies for college that are available to eligible low income students.

Veterans, depending on circumstances, can be eligible for Pell grants and, importantly, their military benefits do NOT count for determining the estimated family contribution.

With the support of Congress, the President signed into law nearly \$40 billion dollars to be allocated for Pell Grants over the next ten years.

The number of students leveraging Pell grants to help them pay for college has increased by more than 50%, since the President took office.

We've gone from 6 million students with Pell grants enrolled in our nation's colleges and universities in 2008 to more than 9.6 million today – and that number is growing.

The President's budget for next year proposes to increase the maximum Pell grant award to \$5,635 – a \$905 increase since 2008.

We want service members, Veterans and their families – if eligible – to access federal financial aid and to do that, they need to complete the FREE application for federal student aid - called the FAFSA. That form has been dramatically simplified in the last three years and takes about 20 minutes to complete. Unfortunately there are private companies that solicit potential students to complete the FAFSA at a cost, but by going directly to the fafsa.ed.gov website, there is no cost to the individual. By completing the FAFSA, applicants will learn if they qualify for federal grants, loans or scholarships.

No Department of Education funds can flow without completing this FAFSA form and, importantly, federal loans offer a myriad of benefits that help students with repayment if they get into difficulties. We want service members, Veterans and their children to apply for federal aid before they turn to private loan products or credit cards.

IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY:

Efforts being led by the Department of Education have **increased transparency** – ways for students INCLUDING Veterans – to compare and contrast colleges and the costs of a post-secondary education.

We are helping prospective students **assess financial aid offers** – so they make informed financial and educational decisions.

College Navigator (now available) shares information about colleges and universities and the programs they offer; two new tools are forthcoming in the next few months – the College Scorecard and the “Know Before You Owe” Financial Aid Shopping Sheet. These are efforts to **improve information flow** and **facilitate quality decision-making by students**, including service members, Veterans and their families.

In particular, the Scorecard helps students and their families understand the costs of the colleges to which they are considering applying; the “Know Before You Owe” Financial Aid Shopping Sheet helps students understand and consider the financial aid letters they receive from various colleges and universities.

The recent Executive Order 13607, signed on April 27, 2012, addresses the fact that some Veterans and their families have been taken advantage of in the educational marketplace; it offers principles of excellence designed to insure that service members, Veterans and their families are offered quality educational opportunities and the information needed to make quality decisions. And, it asks educational institutions to step up to the plate to do more to help insure on campus success for Veterans.

FORTHCOMING TOOL KIT AND UPCOMING SYMPOSIA:

A new “tool kit” is coming out from the Department of Education on strategies to increase college persistence and completion. This is the outgrowth of a January 2012 Symposia on college completion held at the Department of Education – focusing on vulnerable student success. This new document links evidence with practice and is designed to assist colleges in thinking systemically and systematically about college success. These efforts will help Veterans returning to college by creating improved programs for student support, including skill building, advising and mentoring.

In Oct. 2012, the Department will be holding another symposium – this one on Innovation and Technology in higher education. This event will explore the ways teaching and learning are changing with advanced technology, learning sciences and modern analytics to personalize the educational experience and accelerate gains in knowledge and skills. With key stakeholders, we will consider how these advances can improve outcomes for all of our students, including our most vulnerable students for whom higher education success remains a challenge.

These are just a few of the initiatives underway in the Department of Education, but I’d like now to focus in particular on what the Department of Education has been doing in support of Veterans – getting them to campus and then helping them succeed while on campus. We can all agree that entering college is not enough – we need students to complete college and earn their degrees and certificates for good jobs and success in life.

I want to describe FIVE INITIATIVES DESIGNED FOR BENEFIT OF VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES INTERESTED IN AND PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION:

1. Veteran Upward Bound programs:

One key program the Department of Education offers is the Veterans Upward Bound. VETS who meet certain eligibility requirements can get assistance preparing for college and getting needed information about accessing college. These programs are conducted by colleges and universities and community organizations, and they create opportunities for Vets – for whom returning to school may be a challenge given their age and life experiences and previous school experiences – to learn how to become college-ready in a supportive environment.

The VETS Upward Bound program recognizes the value of education, and that for Vets, it is a pathway to a job skills and a career. There were 47 awarded projects in FY 2011 – 2012, serving more than 5,700 individuals with grant funds totaling approximately \$13 million dollars. The average grant was approximately \$280,400.

For FY 2012 based on budget requests and subject to change, we are anticipating a similar number of grants and allocation of funds.

2. Troops to Teachers:

Another project to note is TROOPS to TEACHERS. This program provides incentives for VETS to teach in high need schools, and since its inception, over 11,200 VETS who now teach have gotten stipends or bonuses through this program. If you add in others who received counseling and non-economic support, the number is 14,500 teachers have been assisted by TTT.

There are some key features of this program that merit attention. More than 95% of the participating Vet teachers completed their three-year teaching commitment.

More than half of the Veteran Teachers teach in large cities. This compares to 32% for all teachers. The TTT Program is also having an impact in filling the shortage of teachers in mathematics, science, and special education. In this regard, 27 percent of TTT teachers teach mathematics, compared to 7 percent of all teachers; 46 percent teach the sciences (biology, geology, physics, and chemistry) compared to 18 percent of all teachers; and 44 percent teach special education, compared to 19 percent of all teachers.

In addition to teaching critical-need subjects, TTT participants also have a more positive effect on student achievement, as compared to non-TTT teachers. For example, a 2008 study of Florida students' reading and mathematics performance indicated that students served by TTT teachers performed significantly higher in both reading and mathematics when compared with students served by non-TTT teachers matched by subject and teaching experience.

Finally, the TTT Program has been very successful in placing 9,340 teachers in high-need schools.

Although the Department of Defense will assume full time responsibility for management of the TTT Program starting very soon, DoD and the Department of Education will continue to work together to support TTT's mission. The two agencies

will work to build connections between ED-funded teacher preparation programs and DANTES to help Veterans find post-service employment and ensure that students have effective, highly qualified teachers.

3. *Veterans Centers of Excellence:*

Pursuant to a grant cycle in 2010 sponsored by FIPSE (the Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education), 15 campuses received three-year grants to create or improve upon Veteran Centers of Excellence on their campuses. Of the grantees, 10 were community colleges and the balance were five year colleges. All save one were non-profit institutions. The three states with the most grantees are: California, Washington and Florida. The total available funding was almost \$6 million dollars and the average grant award (to be used over the three year period) was \$313,000.

Grant activities include:

- A. Establishing a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success on the campus of the institution to provide a single point of contact to coordinate comprehensive support services for veteran students;
- B. Establishing a veteran student support team;
- C. Providing a coordinator whose primary responsibility is to coordinate the model program;
- D. Monitoring the rates of veteran student enrollment, persistence, and completion; and
- E. Developing a plan to sustain the Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success after the grant period.

On August 1, 2012, the Department is holding a convening of these FIPSE grantees as well as other key stakeholders in this space including agency representatives from VA, DoD and ED.

The focus of this event is to develop a set of best practices for Vets on America's campuses – practices that will further Vet success – a critical goal. Campuses need to be aware of the particular needs of our Vet students – adults who are returning to school – with unique challenges and experiences. To that end, there will be working sessions where attendees will share their experiences of what worked and did not work on their respective campuses for Vet students. There will be a keynote address by Professor Nancy Sherman who wrote the acclaimed book, ***The Untold War***, about Vet re-entry into civilian life. There will also be a presentation on PTSD and its effect on Vets on campuses and strategies for addressing this issue.

In reflecting on Vet Centers of Excellence and best practices, attention will be paid to:

- Recruiting and advising veterans
- Collaborating with community organizations
- Developing curriculum
- Retaining and graduating veterans

- Faculty and staff development

4. VOW ACT IMPLEMENTATION:

The VOW Act (Veterans' Opportunity to Work Act of 2011), signed into law on Nov. 21, 2011, is designed to make mandatory (with limited exceptions) and improve the transition program offered to service members as they leave military life and enter civilian life. The goal is to provide a better pathway toward educational opportunity and workforce readiness for the men and women in our services who have served our Nation with pride.

The Department of Education is working closely with its Agency Partners (DoD, each of the service branches, VA, Labor and OPM) as well as the White House to create this revised TAP (as the program is called). The statute requires that this new program be launched this November.

This whole effort is referred to informally by the President as "re-boot camp" - the concept is that the services do boot camp very well, and now they need to do re-entry equally as well.

In this effort, the Department of Education is focused on ensuring that members of the uniformed services learn about college access, college success and college affordability as well as gaining needed voc tech training/credentialing. The Department of Education also wants to ensure that Veterans make wise educational choices (whether for certificates, vocational-technical training or college degrees) and select institutions that that will serve their needs well. We also want everyone to be aware of the federal financial aid offered through the Department of Education. We want to be part of Vet and service members' future educational pursuits.

One of the key aspects of the new transition assistance program is the effort to enable Veterans to translate their military skills into certificates, credits and/or industry-recognized credentials in the civilian world – in the workplace and in education. This "crosswalking" effort will facilitate the re-entry of Veterans and leverage up the knowledge and experiences they had in their military careers.

5. *Children of Service Members who died in Iraq and Afghanistan:*

Beginning with the 2010–2011 academic year, students whose parent or guardian was a member of the US Armed Forces and died as a result of service performed in Iraq or Afghanistan after September 11, 2001 may be eligible to receive the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant.

Applicants must meet certain criteria to qualify for an Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant including:

- A. The student must be ineligible for a Federal Pell Grant because he or she has less financial need than is required to receive Pell funds.
- B. The student must have been 23 years old or younger when the parent/guardian died, OR if he/she was over 23 years old at the time, must have been enrolled in an undergraduate institution at the time.
- C. The student must be enrolled in college at least part-time.

The grant award is equal to the amount of a maximum Pell Grant for the award

year, and cannot exceed the cost of attendance for that award year.

The Department of Education also **wants to recognize the efforts of our agency partners** who, also, are working to help Veterans and service members pursuing post-secondary education. The VA's Yellow Ribbon program and Veterans Work Study are but two such initiatives.

CONCLUSION

I hope this gives you a sense of the work that is underway to improve access to and success in college for Veterans, service members and their families within the Department of Education.

I hope it also showcases the growing work in this field with our agency partners, most particularly DoD, VA and Labor – leveraging the talents across government for this important group of men and women who have, with their families, served our nation and protected our freedom.

I cannot think of any more important initiative as we work to help those who have helped our nation. We want to restore America to having the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world. We have fallen from first in the world a generation ago to 16th. We want to return to being leaders in educational attainment. Our service members, our Veterans and their families can help us achieve this goal: that by 2020, America will once again be first in the world in terms of the number of college graduates.

Our President, our agencies and my agency --- the Department of Education -- thank you for your service to this great nation, we look forward to being good partners with you, and we are committed to helping all of you achieve educational success.